

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 DHA-02 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7282
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 4490

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, TS
SUBJ: BEN SALAHIST TRIAL

REF: TUNIS 4326

1. STATE SECURITY COURT TRIAL OF BEN SALAHISTS CONTINUED
UNTIL JUNE 22 WHEN PROCEEDINGS WERE ADJOURNED BECAUSE OF
ILLNESS OF PRESIDING JUDGE. COURT OFFICIALS TOLD DEFENSE LAW-
YERS THAT TRIAL MAY BE RESUMED JUNE 28.

2. IN SESSIONS HELD LAST WEEK, INTERROGATION OF DEFENDENTS
FOLLOWED LINES ESTABLISHED IN FIRST WEEK OF TRIAL. PROCEED-
INGS REPORTEDLY BEING CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH TUNISIAN
JUDICIAL PRACTICE AND ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. PRESIDING JUDGE
HAS POSED QUESTIONS ABOUT BEN SALAHIST GROUP'S ACTIVITIES
CENTERING ON THE PREPARATION OF TRACTS. THERE HAVE BEEN NO
SIGNIFICANT NEW DISCLOSURES AND NO EXAMINATION SO FAR OF EVIDENCE
OF SERIOUS ANTI-REGIME SUBVERSION. DEFENSE LAWYERS TOLD US THAT ONE
DEFENDENT (A FORMER INTERIOR MINISTRY OFFICIAL) TOLD COURT
THAT HE WAS SURPRISED TO LEARN DURING HIS INTERROGATION BY
POLICE THAT THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAD "VERITABLE TORTURE
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LABORATORIES." ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, THE PRESIDING JUDGE
REFUSED TO HEAR THESE CHARGES.

3. PRESS TREATMENT OF THE TRIAL CAN BE DIVIDED INTO TWO CATEGORIES.
GOVERNMENT AND PARTY CONTROLLED PAPERS (L'ACTION, AL-AMAL AND
LA PRESSE) ARE PUBLISHING SELECTIVE STATEMENTS OF THE DEFENDENTS
ACCOMPANIED BY HEADLINES THAT EXTRACT DECLARATIONS THAT TEND TO

SUBSTANTIATE THE GOVERNMENT'S INDICTMENT. PSD WEEKLY DIALOGUE PUBLISHED A CONDEMNATORY ARTICLE ON JUNE 20 ATTACKING THE BEN SALAHISTS. DIALOGUE DREW HEAVILY ON CHARGES IN THE OFFICIAL INDICTMENT AS IF THEY WERE PROVEN FACTS. SEMI-INDEPENDENT DAILIES LE TEMPS AND AS-SABAH ARE PUBLISHING FULLER ACCOUNTS OF TRIAL (DESCRIBED TO US BY DEFENSE LAWYERS AS ACCURATE AND REASONABLY COMPLETE) WITHOUT ATTEMPTS TO PREJUDGE THE ACCUSED. THESE PAPERS ARE ALSO PUBLISHING INDIRECT REMARKS OF DEFENSES PURPORTING THAT THEY WERE MISTREATED DURING POLICE INTERROGATION. MULCAHY

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Message Attributes

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